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JURY FINDS BELL GUILTY OF MURDER, BATTERY, OTHER CRIMES

State Attorney Melissa Nelson announces that a Duval County jury found William Bell Jr. guilty of Second-Degree Murder; Armed Robbery; Battery; Aggravated Assault; False Imprisonment. With the verdict, Bell faces up to life in Florida State Prison. The Honorable Jonathan Sacks will sentence Bell at a later date.

On Nov. 30, 2023, officers conducted a welfare check on the victim after his employer reported he did not show up for work. Patrol officers arrived at the Merrill Road apartment to find the victim's door cracked open; they could see him on the floor with his legs and hands bound. The victim had a plastic bag over his head and a cord wrapped around his neck. Investigators discovered the apartment had been ransacked. The victim's girlfriend said two nights before, someone knocked on his door and yelled; the person knocked the cameras out from outside of the house and left. The next night, someone knocked on the victim's door, and the victim told his girlfriend to go into the bedroom. Bell and a woman stormed into the apartment. A short time later, she came out of the bedroom to find Bell tying up her boyfriend on the floor. The intruding woman took her phone and hit her with a gun. Bell sexually assaulted her, bit her, and attempted to strangle her with a cord. While Bell assaulted the victim's girlfriend, his co-defendant stole items from the apartment. Bell then made the female victim record a video of herself saying her full name on his phone, to use as a threat. The shirt the female victim wore during the assault was collected as evidence and tested for DNA, which matched Bell exactly in the spot where he bit her. Digital evidence showed Bell and the male victim knew each other, and he owed Bell \$1,100.

The case was investigated by the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office and prosecuted by Assistant State Attorneys Rachel Allison and Loana Nardoni.